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Strategic **Development**

THE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY:

HOW THE CORE COMMITMENTS WILL BE ACHIEVED

The Blackstone Corridor is unique among many regions in that it actively pursues six major priorities: education and interpretation, recreation development, ethnic and cultural conservation, historic preservation, economic development and land-use management. That is a very big agenda for a limited staff and budget. Most areas have chosen to concentrate on only one or two of these areas. Think about it - there are a number of cities and towns that have had long-term success in preserving the values that are important to them - but can you think of many “regions” where there has been a long-term history of proactive cooperation across governmental boundaries and among organizations with all sorts of different missions to foster culture, preserve landscapes and historic sites, provide recreation and to base economic development on them? In the long run, the Blackstone approach will give the Corridor exceptional value, but it has meant that the Commission has had to be diligent and exceptionally entrepreneurial in its outreach and in identifying and acting on opportunities.



The Heritage Corridor requires the development of a "critical mass" of visitor sites, programs and services to draw people to the Valley. Targeted investment in key sites, programs, and services will become part of the Commission's legacy for the future.

As stated in the Management Plan, the Commission realizes that cooperative action among state and local governments, civic groups, planning boards, businesses, environmental and cultural organizations - and many others - will be necessary to get the needed results. To get the most of limited Federal funds and time, the Commission has defined four core commitments that will be used as criteria for working in partnership on heritage related projects. As suggested by some Valley professionals, the Commission will consider soliciting proposals for project ideas on a three-year cycle. Priorities and opportunities would be considered as the Commission works with its partners to develop an action agenda for each coming year based on its annual appropriations.

THE DEVELOPMENT APPROACH

Over the years, the financial and in-house commitments from communities and organizations supporting Corridor projects has created an impressive leveraging portfolio for the Commission. These "contingent commitments" by partners — whether it be time, money, staffing or policy revision — will again be key to deciding where the Commission places its resources and assistance.

As the Commission embarks upon its second ten years, it has committed itself to leaving a tangible legacy of sustainable development projects and programs.

The Corridor has been authorized by Congress to receive up to \$5 million in Federal funds in the fiscal years 1998, 1999 and 2000. As in the past, the Commission is required to show a 1:1 match for its investment. The strategic development programs identified on the following pages were identified during the development of this plan, and will ultimately be expanded as communities and organizations further develop projects and plans with the Commission. The Commission assumes that it will need to pursue additional funds and a greater than 50/50 match in order to accomplish its agenda over the next ten years.

The activities listed in this section represent successful, ongoing projects which deserve continued support to achieve their full potential; others are new initiatives, which have been identified as worthy of achievement for the long-range, strategic development plan. The Commission has also forecasted cost estimates for these programs and identifies potential partners to carry out the plan. Each section provides estimated Capital and Operational Costs for a full ten year period. Capital costs support projects that are tangible — "bricks and mortar" type projects such as the restoration of buildings, fabricating signs, publishing brochures, etc. Operational costs may include pre-development, planning and design work, and support for organi-



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zations (these estimates do not include operational staff support for the Commission). A preliminary budget of \$15 million is outlined in the following Development Strategy section.

The Heritage Infrastructure — The Heritage Corridor requires the development of a “critical mass” of visitor sites, programs and services which will draw people to the Valley and engage a diversity of interests in the textile heritage theme. A targeted investment in these core sites, programs, and services will become the Corridor Commission’s physical legacy for the future by:

- **assisting with designing and establishing a northern Corridor visitor center (in Worcester’s Hurley Square) which would serve as a primary gateway into the Valley**
- **completing the Corridor-wide identity program (signage, interpretive and tourism publications, television programming, film, etc.)**
- **developing a network of “hospitality centers,” in partnership with local tourism related businesses that would act as an outlet for visitor information (using the Corridor identity system - design brochure racks, literature, etc. that could be distributed from these points)**
- **completing visitor centers at Slater Mill in Pawtucket and the Museum of Work and Culture in Woonsocket, and interpretive exhibits/visitor information at Kelly House in Lincoln and River Bend Farm in Uxbridge; and nurturing their ongoing development**
- **developing “exhibit centers” and/or “attractions” to infuse the heritage story with life at key thematic sites (approx. 1,000 s.f. of space or attractions that provide dynamic/interactive interpretation opportunities); example sites may include industrial paternalism at Hopedale/Whitinsville, the first planned mill village at Slatersville, a canal boat excursion at River Bend Farm or Kelly House, etc.)**
- **establishing connections through the development of off-shoot trails and intermodal transportation services (bicycle to watercraft liveries) from the bikeway and River to key visitor sites**
- **assisting with stabilization of remaining canal locks and other critical features, such as Millville Lock and Goat Hill Lock in conjunction with Massachusetts DEM**

Estimated Capital Development Cost:	\$3,425,000
Estimated Programming Cost (10 years):	\$1,600,000

Partnership and leveraging opportunities

Identifying the entire Valley, and key historic and natural sites within, is critical to heightening awareness of this nationally significant region. Completing the Corridor-wide sign system is a top priority for the Commission over the next ten years. Each of the twenty original communities has in place a Cooperative Agreement to work with the Commission and state highway departments to establish signs in their community. Forging Cooperative Agreements in the new communities will be a first step in continuing the program.

Like other infrastructure projects completed in the past, several funding programs offer unique opportunities to leverage Corridor funds for greater effect. For example, federal transportation “Enhancement Funds” are being used to revitalize Market Square in Woonsocket, more than matching the relatively small Commission contribution. Landscape features throughout the Square and outdoor exhibits will communicate the impressive use of water power harnessed to catapult the City center into textile prominence. Similarly, the RIDEM is targeting the Federal Lands Highway Program for key access, parking and visitor service needs related to development of the Blackstone Bikeway.

Local businesses as “hospitality centers” and private concessions supporting visitor center activities offer numerous partnership opportunities.



The celebration and interpretation of the Blackstone Valley’s cultural legacy complements the visitor sites under development.

HERITAGE PROGRAMMING

The celebration and understanding of the Blackstone Valley's cultural legacy through education, festivals and events, coordinated activities among sites, and through the traditional arts, complements the physical infrastructure being developed. Heritage-related programming would accommodate a variety of ongoing and new initiatives such as:

- **develop a cultural conversation program to perpetuate folklife expressions and educate others about the Valley's cultural and ethnic heritage — document various folk groups, ethnicity, celebrations, song and dance, craftsmanship, etc.**
- **assisting the existing sites in telling the Valley's story by providing interpretive materials, helping train volunteers, and assisting in identifying the role of individual sites in the Valley's larger story**
- **"teaching teachers" program for the public schools emphasizing curriculum development in local and regional heritage**
- **developing working relationships with organizations which support cultural events and the traditional arts; integrate Commission activities and provide support to organizations such as the Blackstone River Theatre (Pendragon), Labor and Ethnic Heritage Festival, Waters Farm, etc.**
- **forging a new level of working relationships among partnership sites focused on creating a cohesive visitor experience (e.g. additional Corridor-wide interpretation, coordinated hours, marketing strategies, tour packages, joint tickets, etc.)**
- **holding an annual conference on the American Industrial Revolution (in cooperation with other associated organizations, such as Slater Mill, Lowell National Historical Park, American Textile Museum, etc.)**
- **launching a program to train volunteers to assist NPS rangers in education, interpretation, tours, etc.**
- **initiating an early American History promotional collaboration with other "headline" New England sites (Plymouth, Sturbridge, Lowell, Mystic, Salem, Boston, etc.)**

Estimated Capital Development Cost: \$150,000

Estimated Programming Cost (10 years): \$1,000,000

Partnership and leveraging opportunities

Keeping the stories and traditions alive in the Valley promotes and sustains a true pride of place. More than a dozen walking tour brochures, which incorporate wonderful local anecdotes and special places, are complete. Others are underway, and brochures will be developed for each of the recently added Towns. Arts and Humanities programs at the state and federal level offer funds for communities and organizations to archive, promote or teach folkway traditions. In Massachusetts, the Commission collaborated with Massachusetts Audubon and Clark University through the Massachusetts Foundation for the Humanities for "Knowing Our Place," a guide and program featuring historic waterways and how they have affected peoples' lives. With the Rhode Island Heritage Commission, the Corridor Commission collaborated through a Rhode Island Committee for the Humanities grant on a Blackstone Valley Foodways project featuring recipes as a window into community folklife.



The Commission will remain committed to assisting visitor sites by providing interpretive materials, training volunteers, and helping sites define their roll in bringing the Valley's heritage story to life.

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STRATEGIC DESIGN AND PLANNING ASSISTANCE

Assistance would be provided as requested by the Commission's partners, such as local municipalities, offering early "on the scene" expertise where assistance is proactive and not reactive by:

- creating a planning assistance program which provides "seed" funds to assist local communities in guiding new investment that enhances preservation of historic buildings, village character, and natural areas
- establishing an annual public awards program recognizing progressive practices in land use and historic preservation
- retaining an economic analyst (e.g., on-call consultant) who can demonstrate the projected fiscal impacts (positive and negative) from a given development proposal; consultant could analyze economic costs and benefits of alternative approaches
- providing technical assistance for the protection of critical historic and natural resources (such as lands along either side of the river/canal, critical viewsheds, natural areas which form settings for heritage sites, scenic roads, farmland, etc.)
- working with communities to create supportive zoning which directs investment toward established mill complexes and away from environmentally sensitive open land

Estimated Capital Development Cost: \$0
Estimated Programming Cost (10 years): \$1,500,000

Partnership and leveraging opportunities

Communities, civic groups and individuals struggle every day to retain the special characteristics of their village centers, Main Streets, hilltop settlements, and river corridors. Targeting technical assistance to solve one piece of a larger vision with the commitment or potential for others to take further action is a key strategy for the Commission. For example, in Millbury, the Town desired to redraft an outdated master plan in advance of expected development pressures from the pending Route 146 connection with the Mass Turnpike. Utilizing a nominal amount of Corridor funds, the Town matched those dollars and went on to leverage from state and local businesses more than three times the initial outlay. In the Town of

Blackstone, a Corridor-sponsored planning and design process to tap heritage tourism possibilities along Main Street, led one visionary entrepreneur to buy and renovate the historic Arcade Building as an antique center. The Town added to that effort by securing Community Development Block Grant funds for period street lamps, trees and additional preservation steps.



Strategic assistance from the Commission can be targeted to protect significant cultural landscapes in advance of threatening circumstances.

BLACKSTONE VALLEY INSTITUTE

A key component of the Commission's preservation strategy is the development of educational outreach programs that offer ongoing workshops and courses designed to address key issues facing the Valley. The concept of "Institute" evolved from local people's concerns about growth and community character, economic development, education and environmental conservation. The Commission, through its partnership-driven "Institute" program, would offer local leaders, organizations and interested citizens both a forum to discuss topics of interest or concern and a practical means to find solutions to local issues. Its effectiveness will depend upon a strong commitment from private organizations, the business community, and educational institutions to partner with local, state and Federal government agencies and apply their combined expertise to addressing these local issues.

The proposed Blackstone Valley Institute would offer local officials, community leaders, organizations and interested citizens a forum to discuss topics of concern and practical ways to find solutions to local issues. The Institute could be managed as a direct operation of the Commission with programs offered through various partners throughout the Corridor. Programs would be issue-driven and broad-based, blending expert perspectives from inside and outside the Valley.



Courses and applications would be issue-driven and broad-based. The Commission would facilitate programs that would blend both Valley and national perspectives and take advantage of expertise from the many exceptional resources the northeast region offers. Topics could include:

- an interpretive training course for people that work at heritage sites that would include topics on presentation skills, developing publications, program development, and interpretive planning
- historic preservation planning and preservation treatments
- community development and downtown revitalization
- cultural conservation programs such as collecting oral histories, supporting traditional artisans, festival planning, etc.
- needs assessment for strengthening the organizational capacity of heritage-related non-profits
- grant-writing workshops, presentations by fundraising professionals and foundation representatives
- operational and fundraising strategies to sustain visitor centers and related programming
- workshops targeting builders, Conservation Commissions, Boards of Health and others to address good site development practices
- land protection strategies and open space conservation
- commuter rail development and intermodal transportation service
- environmental awareness and recovery programs that would incorporate environmental curriculum development, sponsorship of river clean-ups, canoeing instruction, etc.

Estimated Capital Development Cost: \$500,000
 Estimated Programming Cost (10 years): \$2,000,000

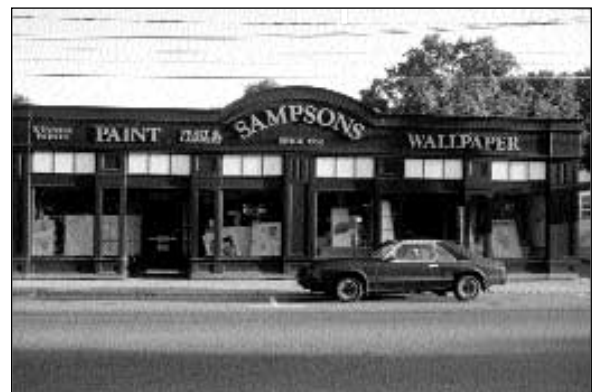
PRESERVATION AND ENHANCEMENT PROGRAMS

The Commission has assumed responsibility not only for interpreting but for identifying and preserving the natural and cultural resources in the Valley that enhance the public's understanding of the American Industrial Revolution. The Commission's funds will be targeted strategically to provide improvements to special places of interpretive value. Investments here will be focused to help visitors understand the Story by:

- providing enhancement funds to targeted interpretive areas for renovation and reuse of historic structures and surrounding landscapes that provide context
- leveraging local banks and community reinvestments to support Commission investments in downtown preservation and revitalization
- providing technical assistance through the National Park Service to key historic sites to address appropriate building rehabilitation practices and materials conservation
- providing technical assistance for preservation of historic landscapes with emphasis on native and historic plant materials

Estimated Capital Development Cost: \$1,500,000

Estimated Programming Cost (10 years): \$400,000



Opportunities exist in downtown areas to leverage the investment of Commission funds with matching support from local financial institutions and municipalities in ways that help to revitalize targeted commercial areas.

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The environmental impacts of industrialization on the river have been extensive, creating both challenges and opportunities. Over the next ten years, the Commission will focus on education, support for recovery programs, and programmatic opportunities where the river becomes part of community revitalization through a renewed sense of its recreational value.

Partnership and leveraging opportunities

Wonderful architectural resources and representative landscapes are woven throughout the Valley. They are icons of their communities and deserve a special measure of protection. Also, the rehabilitation of a key historic structure can be the catalyst for more wide-ranging preservation efforts in a neighborhood or village. The restoration of the Grafton Fire House has spurred interest from neighboring businesses and residents who are now making improvements. Preservation of the Federated Church in Blackstone, part of the mill owners “created” New England village, reaffirmed the Town’s commitment to saving and revealing its special history. In many cases, towns and cities look to Community Development Block Grants to augment individual preservation efforts. Associations or civic groups which support historic buildings as their home have raised funds through their membership and fundraising events to match Commission and state preservation dollars.

RIVER RECOVERY AND RECREATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The impacts of the industrial revolution on the river system were extensive, leading today to both challenges and opportunities. The Commission will focus on education, support for recovery programs at the various governmental and grassroots levels, and opportunities for the River to become a vital part of community and economic revitalization by:

- continuing to build a system of River access points where people will have opportunities to fish, canoe, and enjoy passive recreation; create constituencies to maintain and support River access sites, support partner activities, like the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, to build river landings for the Blackstone Valley Explorer
- signing waterways and stenciling storm drains to raise public consciousness of the extent and location of the Blackstone’s complex tributary system
- coordinating nature programming and hiking opportunities with nature centers, such as those operated by the Audubon Society of Rhode Island and Massachusetts
- providing planning and financial assistance to targeted communities that support downtown revitalization through the redevelopment of waterfront properties, e.g. the State pier renovation and riverwalk concept in Pawtucket; other riverfront park and commercial opportunities
- working collaboratively with government agencies and organizations on river recovery programs that support improvements in water quality and quantity, habitat restoration, reintroduction of migratory fish (development of fish ladders at least up to Lonsdale Marsh), and local efforts in environmental education, stream monitoring, and land protection along the River

Estimated Capital Development Cost: \$1,650,000

Estimated Programming Cost (10 years): \$1,000,000

Partnership and leveraging opportunities

In the past, both river recovery and recreational activities seem to cover the spectrum: very local, volunteer initiatives for river cleanups and trail cutting to far-reaching state and federal efforts to restore fish habitat. In addition to local citizens, municipalities and regional recreational groups like the Bay State Trail Riders have provided the labor to match Commission funds to accomplish

projects, such as making portions of the Southern New England Trunkline Trail accessible. Many of the Commission's targeted river access sites will require volunteer activities ranging from clearing brush to setting steps for canoe launches. More formidable will be the vast array and levels of partnerships and funding support to tackle difficult issues like introducing migratory fish to lower portions of the Blackstone, and addressing failing dam structures which hold back toxic sediments. Both states, the Corridor communities, the business community, the Army Corps of Engineers, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, and other federal agencies must be enlisted to champion these serious problems.

A TRANSITIONAL ERA FOR THE COMMISSION

Congress put in place a Federal Commission, for a span of two ten-year terms, to develop partnerships aimed at preserving, interpreting and enhancing the Blackstone Valley. At the time, there was only one other Heritage Commission in the country. Within a decade, a nationwide movement to develop heritage preservation and development projects ensued. Today, there are many heritage projects that are supported by various types of entities. The establishment of new Federal Commissions has been limited and newly designated entities have taken on the form of non-profits, state coordinated efforts and regional authorities. If current trends hold true over the next decade, the Commission should be prepared to transition itself into a new type of entity(s) that will continue to invest in the preservation and heritage development of the region.

The Blackstone's designation as a National Heritage Corridor will remain but the "Commission's" future after its twentieth year needs further exploration. The Commission's organizational umbrella has enabled it to reach beyond town and state lines and develop a regional approach to preserve, market and interpret the Valley's heritage. The Commission has been encouraged to explore, with its partners, alternative management structures that would continue to carry out the Commission's stewardship role. In looking at various long-term strategies, the Commission will look at ways that each heritage partner can be assured of reaching their goals through partnership which balances centralized and decentralized operations. Ultimately, the desire of the Commission is to ensure that the initiatives of the first two decades are continued and that the Blackstone Valley as a nationally significant landscape is preserved and the quality of life enhanced.

Estimated Capital Development Cost:	\$150,000
Estimated Programming Cost (10 years):	\$500,000

Summary

of the Ten Year Program Budget Projections

The Commission's funding authorization of \$5,000,000 requires a 1:1 match. However, in order to achieve the desired goals, a stronger match will be required. The budget projections below indicate a 2:1 partner to Commission match for a total projected budget of just over \$15,000,000. It has been, however, the Commission's experience and will continue to be an objective to leverage these activities further.

Core Commitment	Capitol Development Costs *	Annual Programming Costs *
Heritage Infrastructure	\$ 3,425,000	\$ 1,600,000
Heritage Programming	\$ 150,000	\$ 1,000,000
Strategic Design and Planning Assistance	\$ 0	\$ 1,500,000
Blackstone Valley Institute	\$ 500,000	\$ 2,000,000
Preservation and Enhancement Programs	\$ 1,500,000	\$ 400,000
River Recovery and Recreational Development	\$ 1,650,000	\$1,000,000
Stewardship Transition	\$ 150,000	\$ 500,000
Totals	\$ 7,375,000	\$ 8,000,000
Combined Total		\$ 15,375,000

* Figures are based on a 2:1 Partner to Commission match. These costs do not reflect the annual operating costs for the Commission. All Development funds are targeted to support local grass-roots projects and efforts.